

## INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE WITHIN THE HARE KRISHNA MANDIR COMMUNITY YOGYAKARTA

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### Abstract

*This paper aims to know how inter-religious dialogue was grasped by Hare Krishna Mandir community in Jogjakarta. Hare Krishna Mandir is one of Hindu community boarding schools (Asram) which being in Indonesia beneath of the umbrella of International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). Results show that core of tenet of Hare Krishna Mandir community emphasizes on the development of individual knowledge and spirituality of student as a Hindus. Somehow, the community is being aware on pluralism context of Indonesia, therefore it also gives special attention on its community relationship to the others who live surround them. The community claims the necessity to develop interreligious dialogue as basic daily approach of communication with the others. Sunday Face comprises of the embodiment of that understanding. It is a program heading on Sunday, every week, involving many participants from different backgrounds. They gather together, they talk and share some relevant issues, and they learn from one and another point of views on solution as well as contribution to those. The program obviously contributes to sustaining religious harmony in Jogjakarta, and of course it gives better understanding for Indonesian people on the importance of inter-religious dialogue in a plural society of Indonesia. In addition to, it also contributes to shape open minded, necessity to hear, to learn, and to respect one and others among not only religious people, also society at all.*

**Key words:** Hare Krishna Mandir, interreligious dialogue, Sunday Face

### INTRODUCTION

In a multicultural world, different experiences of the Divine are inevitable. A true experience and knowledge of the Divine is impossible to be claimed only as part of certain religion tradition. Religion is much more relating to the Divine privately, however, it is also a connection with humanity. Those two dimensions for long times had brought people from different religions into some confrontations and wars which were done on behalf of religions for thousand years. Despite religions relations were historically marked by confrontation, rivalry and war, the last two decades have seen many efforts towards new understanding between religions in the world. The religious

encounter between people from different religions in the world postulate the need to know, to understand and to respect one and other in order to prevent conflict and violence like what that happened in the past. Breaking down silence, entering dialogue is both smart idea and action ever done by religious people in order to open better understanding among religious people as human being.

Dialogue is necessary. It is primarily an act of communication in which two ways process occurs occasionally. Through dialogue, then decode information and encode a response from the speaker and the listener occur in switching roles and in linearity process (Sugunasiri, 1996:145). To be sure, dialogue among religions nowadays may takes place as very effective way in enhancing and nourishing people understandings on the others. Through such kind of dialogue, everyone has chance to share his/her values, along with that she/he can listen, and can learn from the other's values and also it can take place at different levels.

Interreligious dialogue is the encounter of two worldviews. However, it has important role in facilitating not only interreligious tolerance but also interreligious action. Interreligious dialogue is not only covering the ability to live together but also the ability to work together (Swidler and Mojlez, 2000:147). This statement means that one always like or not meet the others in everyday activities. We talk each other and also we interacts one and other.

In a country which is home to people belonging to different racial and religious background like Indonesia then real interreligious dialogue isn't easy. However, it has always been a very important factor to unite peoples and to make them as parcels of one and same country. Everyday encounter among Indonesian which come from different races, religions, cultures, provinces and etc on one hand will potentially arise possibility of tension, clash, and conflict to be happened between one and others. On another hand, it is possible to trap one in such kind of chit-chat dialogue, or such kind of masked relationship. Therefore, those are needed to be negotiated wisely through some actions in which everyone is able to speak for him/her and along with that wants to hear what other say. Speaking for him /herself of course postulates a necessity of a space in which she/he confidentially able to speak for him/herself. Then, interreligious dialogue is an offering. However, we have to able to distinguish between untrue religious dialogue and true religious dialogue. Knitter mentioned that true interreligious dialogue goes beyond than just chit-chat process in which someone talks mainly to be nice to each other. It is more than just an exchange of information so that one can understand each other better ( Knitter, : 4). It goes beyond than a masked relationship because

it is a real conversation in which one both talks and listens, one both speaks his/her mind and also opens mind to the others. In addition, it is a space in which both one tries to persuade the other of the truth and value of what she/he believes, at the same time, is ready to be so persuaded by what his/her partner holds as to be true and valuable.

Since the country is a multi-culture, then interreligious dialogue should become part of Indonesian social life. However, we cannot deny that its effort is still in ongoing process in Indonesia. Therefore, it should be supported by all components of the country. Despite there some obstacles occur on it process, every Indonesian has duty to promote it in his/her everyday encounter with the others in order to shape better understanding as well as better interrelationship with others. Like what is done by Hare Krishna Mandir community in Jogjakarta. Even though it is just a small Hindu's community, its teachings and programs is directed to develop better understanding of Hindus on their own spiritual values as well as better relationship with the others from different religions. This paper reveals how that community has grasp and has utilized inter-religious dialogue for establishing their internal and external relationships with the others nicely. It will elaborate firstly the profile and its relevant pertinent of roles. Secondly, it will focus on inter-religious dialogue process which is availed by it and also some discussions on it.

This study is based on data gathered by the author in the research conducted in 2010. Both interviews and observations were done with members of Hare Krishna Mandir from different genders in order to get data. Model used a qualitative research. The participants were queried informally and formally about their willingness to take part in this research primarily to answer the question how does Hare Krishna Mandir community understand and develop inter-religious dialogue. The non structured interviews allowed respondents to share their views, beliefs and attitudes about interreligious dialogue. Data had simultaneously been analyzed through data's collection, reduction, display, verification, presentation, conclusion and the last one data clarification. All information had been interpreted and those processes of analysis done interactively based on those components.

## **PROFILE OF HARE KRISNA MANDIR COMMUNITY**

Ashram Narayana Smerti or Hare Krishna Mandir is one of Hindus community, located at Sudarsan Chakra No 3, Kampung Depok, Maguwoharjo, Sleman Jogjakarta. It is part of Hindus world organizations beneath of International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). ISKCON established by Om Vishnupada A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in July 1966 in New

York USA. This is an international community for worshippers of Sri Krishna which come from all over of the world. Hare Krishna Mandir is one of ISKCON prolongation hand in Indonesia. It was precisely established in 1996 in Jogjakarta. As Hindu's community, Hare Krishna Mandir has a great vision in developing its community in order to be accepted by Hindus in Indonesia, and largely by Indonesian society at all.

Vision of Hare Krishna Mandir is actualizing roles as a Hindus religious education community which able to educate students to get full comprehension about Hinduism and to become better Hindus based on Sri Krishna's religious teachings. It has three missions. (1) To conduct and to develop such kind of analysis of *Tattwa* or Hinduism's philosophy based on some teachings of *Veda* for Hindus especially for young generation. (2) To conduct such kind of studies in action on ethics and moralities relate to Hinduism's teachings, along attempts to apply those obviously within society life at all. (3) To develop action in doing ritual of veneration and *Sadhana* which appropriate to the tradition of *Veda*.

Besides those missions, it has seven aims why it has been developed. First, it tries to increase comprehension of Hindus about teaching of *Veda*, in particular, related to all teachings being inside both book of *Bhagavad-Gita* and *Bhagavata Purana* based on *Waisnawa's* paradigm. Second, is to help large society to be able in differing reality from illusion, differing spirituality from worldliness, and also differing eternal from transitory. Third, is to expose negative impacts of materialism. Fourth, is to give guidance of Hinduism's spiritual practices for Hindus within everyday life, fit to all techniques already explained by *Veda*. Fifth, is to conserve and to spread abroad culture of *Veda*. Sixth, is to conduct and to spread abroad true spelling of holy names of God as taught by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Seventh, is to help each Hindus to memorize Sri Krishna, and to serve Him.

### **ASHRAM AS MODEL OF COMMUNITY**

Hare Krishna Mandir takes model of *Ashram* as its core of community. It is actually based on Hinduism's concept of educational system. There at least two popular models of traditional educational system developed by Hindus around the world to educate their young generations. First, is called *Ashram* and the other one so-called *Gurukula*. *Ashram* is Hinduism's traditional educational system which obligates its students to live in a board. Further, it emphasizes more on Hinduism's spiritual education for its community. *Gurukula* means a living house of a teacher. In this model, members who are interested in to learn Hinduism's concepts will live together with a teacher at his home, or at

certain place which functions as living house for them. Members will become part of teacher's family. Both *Ashram* and *Gurukula* are very popular in India's traditional educational system. In Indonesian context, Koentjaraningrat in his research mentioned that educational system of *Ashram* ever developed in pre-Islamic period. However, it almost disappeared from Indonesia's model of education shortly after the coming of Islam and Christianity, and also in periods during colonization. Shortly after the independence era, then it again began to be developed by Indonesian Hindus. Better access going back and forth to India being primary reason for *Ashram* to be grown faster in Indonesia. In fact, the development of *Ashram* is not just occurred in Indonesia, it also occurs in many of Western countries and Africa as well.

As an *Ashram*, Hare Krishna Mandir grows and practices some of Hinduism educational rules for its all members, in particular for students who are interested in to learn about Krishna. Students of HKM usually come from various backgrounds of ages, races, genders, education, and occupation. Some of them come from different provinces of Indonesia, even there are some foreign students who come from different states around the world. Most of HKM students are living in the *Ashram*, it provides rooms for them either for male or for female. However, there few of them are back and forth to the *Ashram*, because their homes are near to it. Students daily activities are divided into three in common, they pray and listen to some teachings. They usually take some courses related to Hinduism's philosophical and spiritual teachings. This activity formally will lead a student attain a higher level in Hinduism's philosophical and spiritual formation than before. They involve in *Ashram*'s everyday discussions on actual issues run after courses class. Practicing Yoga is unavoidable for students at all. This is the core exercise for all members.

Living simply and humbly is the motto of the HKM community. Those mean that men show his/her dignity as human being while he/she able to live in simple way, able to become humble being both in vertical relation to God as well as in horizontal relation to the other, and also able to become humble to live in harmony with nature. Those principles obvious realized through students paths of dressing up, eating, and attitude in relating to one and others. Students both male and female usually wear simple clothes, used to worn by *Guru*. It consists of white and yellow clothes. Wearing those colors determined on spiritual stages achieved by students. HKM community usually provides simple meals for its all members; no meats, no milk, no snacks, and etc from animal. In other words, they just cook and eat food from plant and its all products. They believe in that both human and animal are living things. Those have some similarities. One of similarities is that those are bloody living

things. Therefore, they will get unhappiness feelings if they eat products of animal. Eating animal products mean doing harm to another living thing and it violates Dharma. In addition to, living simply and humbly means too that students have responsibilities to both respecting and treating well to the teacher (*guru*) as well as to one and others. One and others should live in love and harmony. One wants to understand and to respect to rights of others fully. In other words, don't do harm to both others and nature is core principle of the community.

### **BASIC ROLE OF HARE KRISHNA MANDIR**

Hare Krishna Mandir is intrinsically one of Hindus's *ashram* focuses on internal development of the Hindus spiritualities, primarily on individual consciousness. The decision to focus on Hindus spiritualities is actually based on its understanding of basic concept about Sri Krishna and his teachings. In Hinduism's tradition, worshiping Sri Krishna is an old tradition which takes root in the teaching of Bhagavad-Gita. Bhagavad-Gita is the utterance book of Sri Krishna to Arjuna five thousand years ago before the war of *Bharatayudha* occurred. It is the spiritual teaching's book for the Hindus.

I Made Sarva, A *pujari* (priest) of Hare Krishna Mandir mentioned that Hare Krishna Mandir was established in order to help Hindus particularly young generations to learn Hinduism's knowledge. In Hinduism, There are two kinds of knowledge. First, so-called *para widadya* means spiritual knowledge. Second, *para widya* means material knowledge. As a community that was established based on Krishna consciousness movement, then it tries to develop consciousness about Krishna to its all members of community through those studies above. Here, the role of Hare Krishna Mandir is to give illumination of Hindu's knowledge for the students theoretically and practically. Therefore, focus of this community is on the development of Hindus religious theories and practices instead of developing all kinds of community development programs.

In line with its focus, then it has been advancing its role in advocating the Hindus who want to know deeply about Krishna and also advocate them to live accordingly with Krishna teachings. Here, individual progress in knowing and in practicing the teachings of Krishna is privileged. It is important for someone to know deeply about the universe, all kinds of harmonization and balancing of life, between what is called as spiritually and what is called as worldly. Indeed, those knowledge and practices by Hindus in this world are just dedicated to Sri Krishna. In order to support the notions above, then it develops Sri Krishna's teachings and practices based on the concepts of



harmonization and balancing of life such as love to one and others and also love to nature.

### **AHIMSA: CORE TEACHING FOR DOING INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

In its practice, Hare Krishna Mandir is aware on pluralistic context of Indonesia. Therefore, it considers developing those intern teachings above integrally with this pluralistic context. The community emphasizes on appreciation for other's life. This appreciation is obvious through its member's understandings of how to treat the others with all kindness as well as respectfulness. The community grasps that the good manners in treating the others are based on Hinduism famous concept of *Ahimsa*.

*Ahimsa* derived from Sanskrit, from term "a" means non, without and *himsa* means violence. *Ahimsa* means respect for all living things and avoidance of violence towards others (Judy Pearsall: 1999, page 27). It is the core principle of Hindus in doing everyday activities in everyday life. It is also adopted as the basic principle or approach in doing dialogue with others. Indeed, HKM community attempts to apply and to embody that philosophy as the basic teaching and also as the basic rule in developing individual's understanding on Krishna and on daily social life as well as along as basic response in developing intra and inter relationship to others. Treating the others well is valuable. It is embodiment of a balance of love to God. How could a Hindus love to God, if he/she couldn't able to build harmonious relationships to the others. Most of informants interpret this sentence means that true love to God could just be embodied in a good relationship with other human beings and also other living things. Moreover, they argue how come someone can speak that he/she loves to God whereas he/she hates, or gets mad for his/her brothers and sisters. How does he/she claim love to God whereas he/she damages nature without taking responsibility on what that he/she does. In other words, treating others as well as nature well is the key to understand the concept of love to God. Love to God means avoiding doing harm on the others life. It also means avoiding appearing unhappy feeling of the others. Hindus have duties to spread love and happiness on all living things in the world.

### **INTERRELIGIOUS PROGRAMS AT HARE KRISHNA MANDIR COMMUNITY**

As the response to pluralistic context of Indonesia and also their understanding on the concept of love to God above, this community from time to time attempts to accommodate and to develop both its curriculum and program

to be acceptable not only for insiders, but also for outsiders. To become a good Hindus means one should not only has good individual knowledge and spirituality of Hinduism, but also should has extra understanding on other religions teachings. Therefore, this community develops interreligious teaching method in delivering subjects to students. A subject is firstly approached from Hinduism perspective, and then added by other religions perspectives on it. Kade Ariasah (a *Pujari*: Hindu's Priest) mentioned that the perspective of Inter-religious dialogue can actually be started from internal community of one religion through the model of teaching. When someone teaches students or other people, he/she should not just teach that concept from his/her own religion perspective. He/she should also understand this concept from other religion and he/she should teach it in a comprehensively understanding. By doing this, he/she together with students /adherents will be assisted obtaining new sense of sympathy to others. In addition, it will also help us going out from such pity minded and exclusive attitude toward open-minded and open attitude. To see others, should be started from a sense of solidarity to them. We are the same. Hindu, Islam, Christianity etc, is not important. Service of love to God is the most important. It means that duty of Hindus is assisting someone to understand and to recognize Krishna better instead of converting his/her to be A Hindus.

As further action of that approach, the community develops inter-religious dialogue program so-called Sunday Face. It is the program *open to do dialogue* together between members of this community with other people from other different religions. The aim of this program is to enriching and enhancing HKM community understanding on other religious people and their religions, and also to strengthening the existence of the community is not only as Hindu's belonging community, but also is as a cross religious community. It is usually conducted on every Sunday at 13.00p.m. It involves many people from different religions. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhist and others people from indigenous religious branches which being in Jogjakarta are invited to this dialogue. Participants that attending this dialogue are coming from different levels of education; from ordinary people to scholars; from various background such as economists, socialists, theologians, anthropologists, farmers, traders and etc. In order to avoid frozen dialogue, then it is usually arranged in informally situation. In every activity, then every participant is expected want to acquaint others before coming to sharing process. One wants to directly introduce and to speak for him/herself without interferences of others. By doing this, all participants expect able to shape friendly circumstance between one and others before they involve in deeper dialogue about some issues. There some issues are usually shared together such as theology issues,



about humanity problems, social issues and even ecology problems. The participants from different religions are given times to speak for themselves as well as to listen from the others point of views on those issues. Afterwards, as following up of the activity then the participants are possible coming with and address some recommendations or solutions to parties who have competence in. However, failed to address solution is possible too. For HKM community, Sunday Face becomes important time for them to explore more as well as to deepen knowledge about other religions as well as some urgent issues that occur in the context of Indonesia recent time. Through this dialogue, they can learn directly about religions, those tenets and practices and even some positive experiences from those adherents. Besides that, they are also given chances to involve together with the others in not only giving response but also in managing some serious problems that are occurring in society of Jogjakarta and even Indonesian society largely nowadays. Niluh Wayan reveals that she feels happy following the program because it gives some positive impacts on Hindus relationships with other religious people in Jogjakarta such as the program reduces negative images, stigma, stereotype, prejudices from others to Hindus and vice versa. It also reduces possibilities of new tension, clash, and new conflict that maybe can appear between one and others participants. More often the participants meet one and others, talk to one and other, listen to one and others, then those will nourish them into new better perceptions as well as better attitudes about others.

Further, most of the members convince that inter-religious dialogue is important because as human, then they have duty to build harmonious relationship with others. Harmonious relationship is just possible through deeper acquaintance of and to others. They claim that interreligious dialogue is not only embodiment of *Ahimsa*, but also embodiment of Sri Krishna's teaching about four ways of Yoga (*Catur Marga Yoga*). It is four ways offered for those who want to be more nearer to attain to God. Those fourth Yoga are (1)*Karma Yoga*. (2)*Jnana Yoga*. (3)*Raja Yoga* and (4)*Bhakti Yoga*. All those emphasize on the development of senses of *bhakti*, love, and surrender as requirements of men more near to attain to God. Inter-religious dialogue is part of *Bhakti Yoga*.

In addition, the community is not only programming its own program but also involving in another interreligious organizations being in Jogjakarta such as FKUB (*Forum Kerukunan antar Umat Beragama*). Besides those, they also lead seminars, conferences, discussions concern on both social-humanity problems and ecology problems. They do those activities in coordination and cooperation with others from different religions. Besides that, as an

appreciation for people who are living surrounding them, then they often involve in *kerja bakti* together with people from *kampung Depok*. For them, *kerja bakti* gives them more times to interact with others, talk each other and also to know one and others. They will get happy if they can help others and can tie together with them.

## DISCUSSIONS

Multiculturalism is Indonesian's fact. However it is often becoming a fuel factor for some conflicts to be occurred in society instead of becoming a glue factor for bounding them. Willingness of people to respecting and accepting one and others well is often put on fire because of missing and less both understanding and knowledge of others. Hare Krishna Mandir community contributes to transform above circumstance of Indonesia, and also educate Indonesian people about how to manage diversity as the strength to produce better society of Indonesia. There some positive impacts arise from HKM community and its interreligious dialogue programs at the grass root level. Largely, it contributes to pluralism in Indonesia. How does pluralism managed It becomes a good starting point in developing better understanding and better interreligious relationship among religious people in Jogjakarta, even in Indonesian context largely. In micro context, interreligious dialogue indeed gives great influence for Hindus and other participants both personally and as community. Hindus and other participants (Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, etc) are given opportunities to talk and to know each other. Of course, this nourishment knowledge leads to growing respected attitudes between them as well. As a consequence, it will reduce prejudices and stereotypes among them that probably ever occurred before. Dialogue process which occurs every week will enhance quality of relationship between them. They will be more open than to one and other, and want to listen too. It will lead them to changing and to growing in good perception and good understanding about others and then able to acting respectfully. These circumstances of course bring some benefits for social life of communities in Jogjakarta. More and more participants from different religions and different locations involving in this interreligious dialogue then side by side better communities are possible to be established.

In macro context, those of course encourage positive appreciation between Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhist, etc to promoting harmonious life either in Jogjakarta or for Indonesian society at all. The dialogue offers some concepts of Hindu which can actually be dialogued with Christianity, Islam and other religions teachings. Religion's concepts as well as tenets of different

religions can be dialogued if all components have mutual trust between one and others, and also based on feeling of honesty and sincerity to listen, and to learn from the others such as mentioned by HKM community. Learning from Sunday Face's program, then mutual trust, honesty and sincerity can be strengthened as good inner modals for fostering better Indonesian individual character and better Indonesian communities as well. Further, it will encourage religious people to maintain better religious relationship. Indeed, since it is a multicultural country, then better harmonious relationship is important in order to avoid ourselves from religious fanaticism and selfish-ism.

As we know, each person lives in his/her own principle as well as own faith differ from others. Deepest understanding toward others will lead someone to better manners in respecting and treating others existences. Of course, it will liberate religious people from antipathy toward emphatic thinking and feelings to others. Through dialogue space of HKM community, then Hindus, Christians, Buddhist, Muslims etc are aided to reduce social estrangement as well as social distance which occur among them. It will assist them to recognize and to comprehend wrestling of others. Of course, this pattern of interreligious dialogue is important to be done continually in order to promote harmonious life of religious people in Indonesia. The providing of adequate space to do dialogue will provide to Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Buddhist, etc some possibilities to encounter intensively and also will assist them to create a dynamic society. From Hare Krishna Community, we learn about the importance of dialogue and cooperation among religious communities in order to pump up and to create better understanding and strong relationship in society.

## CONCLUSION

Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation between religious communities are important because through those, religious people will be assisted, and be encouraged to change mistake perceptions, stereotypes, stigmas, prejudices and even wrong images on others. The concepts of *Ahimsa* in Hindu, *love* in Christianity, and also *mahabbah* in Islam can be uttered as the doors entering dialogue in order to create harmonious and balancing of life. A self-dialogue ability, an ability and a willingness to do dialogue with own self, is probably could be an offering in order to build better mind and attitude toward others. We need to build self-dialogue ability as the basis to construct sort of dialogical in thought too. From Hare Krishna community, we learn how inter-religious dialogue can be developed as life style of religious people in Indonesia. From inter-religious dialogue we can create positive, creative,

and constructive understanding between one and others based on openness, honesty, and sincerity.

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